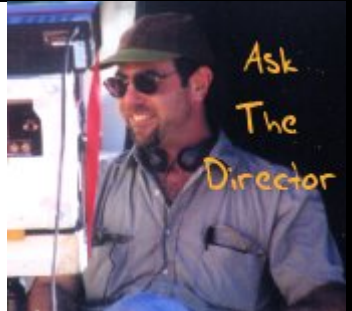


Josh Becker DGA

Directing From The Edge



Q & A Archive
Page 12

Name: David
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Here's a bit more info for you Josh. I admit I don't follow ratings at all but some do. Evidently someone at the Xena forum with a bit more insight to the ratings noticed this discussions and posted this info to be forwarded to you:

While Xena may have been heavily marketed to kids (and still is I'm afraid) the kids audience that Josh claims xena is a hit with has taken the biggest ratings nose dive (about 60%) - both in the states and abroad re -season 3 ... while adults and teens have fallen over 40% overall

In the states

Season 2 Xena had a 4.1 kids rating - it now has a 1.8 rating (down 56%)

NOTE:

these numbers updated to Feb 6th of season 5 and will continue to decrease since xena was down 12% overall this feb sweeps from last feb sweeps

a quick calculation of audience loss since xena's hay day of feb sweeps of S2

These are the AA season averages -

that is the average of the ratings from the season opener to the day indicated for a particular season for women (age range) men (age range) teens kids...any given demographic rating of 1 = 1% of the total US population in that age range.

the US has the following numbers of people in these demographic grps

*Adults 18-49 = 123,900,000
women 18-49 = 62,660,000
children 2-11 = 39,430,000
Adults 25-54 = 116,820,000*

so a 1 rating/1% of say adults 18-49 represents over 3 times as many people as a 1 rating for kids

An AA rating of 1 = 1% of the US households
there are just over 100 million US households

Xena March S2 Vs Oct S5 /Feb S5

AA--W18-49-W25-54--M18-49-M25-54-Tns-kids

post feb sweeps Season 2 xena was at:
5.8--3.7--3.7--3.7--3.8--4.4--4.1

fall Season 5 started out at:
3.9--2.4--2.3--2.2--2.4--3.2--1.6
% chg
-33%.-35%....-38%...-40%..-37%..-27%.-61%

by Feb 6 of season 5 xena was at:
3.6 -- 2.2 --2.3-- 2.1-- 2.0-- 2.7- 1.8
% chg
-38%..-40.5%.-38%...-43%..-47%.-38.6%.-56%

the slide continues with teens and older men ditching the show at a greater rate than women in season 5

and

the change in xena demo's over time
HH-W18-49-W25-54-M18-49-M25-54-Tns-kids

3/30/ S2 (25 wks into season 2)
5.8--3.7--3.7--3.7--3.8--4.4--4.1

5/25/S2 (33 wks into season 2)
5.8--3.6--3.7--3.7--3.7--4.3--4.0

3 weeks into Season 4 (note how men bailed S3 faster than the women)
4.7--3--3--2.6--2.5--3.8--2.3

22 weeks into Season 4 (march)
(women have now also dropped out)
4.2--2.6--2.5--2.4--2.4--3.2--2.5

2 weeks into Season 5 (Oct)
3.9--2.4--2.3--2.2--2.4--3.2--1.6
kids took a major nose dive - didn't come back for xena season 5

S5 to feb 6th
3.6--2.2--2.3--2.1--2.0--2.7--1.8
older men and teens are ditching the show faster than women in season 5

AND IN AU

TV Ratings in AU for Season 2 eps

The airing of season 2 of Xena placed it around 58th on AU ratings list - with 360,000 viewers over all and for children ages 5-12 Xena was coming in around 5th highest watched show for the kids with 244,000 viewers (68% of AU viewers were kids season 2)

Season 3 Xena dropped to 72nd (down 53%) with 170,000 viewers overall

The kids turned the show off !

The bulk of the shows audience is adults and If the shows success is to judged on the basis of the kids ratings - its failed miserably - season 3 cost it over 60% of the kids audience no matter where it airs

advertisers have figured this out - just look at the commercials that get aired during xena

Mr Tapert marketed a show world wide as a family show - he did a 180 season 3 with the content - and the world responded - the kids went to bed without xena

Alot of info there, but it does make a point to who is actually watching Xena and once again backs my statement that Xena isn't a kid's show.

David

Dear David:

You got me, man. "I, Claudius" was a show for kids, "Xena" is a show for adults.

Josh

Name: David

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Well I think you pretty much show your attitude really well. And for the record I never said Xena was a highly intellectual show, just not a kid's show. I mean "Debbie Does Dallas" isn't highly intellectual, but nevertheless it isn't made for kids.

Also I was asking about where you openly contradicted what Rob and Lucy have both stated. This was your comment:

Ah, but that's where you're wrong, obsession-breath. "Xena" is a kid's show.

Lucy(the star of the show) and Rob(the executive producer and creator) said different. You used your above comment to expalin the Joxer character and scenes for your episode, but you explanations went against what other's have said. I simply questioned you on it. I even went further to explain many scenes and storylines that aren't subject matter for kids. You never addressed any of these issues in your responces.

Also since you haven't explained in any way how your comments go against Rob's and Lucy's and only went to cuss me out for confronting you on it I'll think I'll put a bit more on what comes from the mouth of Rob and Lucy than what comes the mouth of you, and that is that Xena IS NOT a 'kid's show.' Yes kids do watch but it is not a 'KID'S SHOW.' If you want to go against that claim then give me an open explanation of what Lucy and Rob has said and explain how the subject matter I detailed is 'made for kids,' instead of the usual 'f**k off' line.

Also you need to learn how to handle confrontation. You say you want to have good discussion, but the moment you get negative feedback or any type of confrontation it's 'f**k off.' That's real mature. You want debate and discussion here, you got it. I'll debate and question, and when I see you make comments like you

did that go against what other's(higher in the know than you) say I won't let it go.

David

Dear David:

Then definitely go with what Rob and Lucy say. I'm wrong, it's a show for adults. Sophisticated mature adults. No problem.

Josh

Name: David

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

A question. Why do you have the comment about trying to keep this a PG-13 site, why you many times you use comments and language that is clearly unsuitable for kids?

I mean I know that is you and if you had kids you probably wouldn't care of they were subjected to that kind of language, but most parents don't want their children being exposed to that. If you are going to have a website open to the world then you need to show respect to all your possible visitors and take responsibility by putting up a disclaimer on the Q&A page warning that their may be offensive language.

Sorry, but that's just how things are supposed to be done when dealing with material that may be offensive to many viewers.

David

Dear David:

Who the fuck are you? Drop dead! You don't like my website, don't come here. And if kids don't like it they can go somewhere else, too. You know, this whole "For the kids" bullshit really gets me down anyway. Everything doesn't have to be suitable for everybody. Quite frankly, I don't give a rat's ass what's good for kids.

Josh

Name: David

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

You just don't get the point do you, Xena is NOT a 'kid's' show as you have claimed.

You admit that you have seen very few episodes and know only about the ones you direct. We'll let's see, the past 3 seasons that consists of what "KS", "F,F&G", "ISAIH", and "ITSF"; 4 of the lightest episodes their are. Go back and watch all the episodes, especially from season 3 on and tell me Xena is a 'kid's' show. Watch in season 3 when Gab is impregnated by a demon and gives birth to an evil daughter which Xena tries to

behead and then goes on to kill Xena's son which leads to Gab killing her own daughter and Xena dragging her a couple of miles behind a horse. Or season 4 where we have the hole way of love vs. the way of the warrior theme which has Xena getting her arms cut of only to turn into a demon to behead her enemy, or the scene with her and Borias going at it doggy style or Ceasar's wet dream of Xena riding him. Of course I mentioned some things of this season. Have you actually seen all these episodes. I don't think so, so do a bit more research before you label the show as a 'kid's' show.

Or visit any forums on the internet, mostly adult women; go to any convention, mostly adult women. Sure many kids watch but that doesn't mean it's a 'kids' show. I mena Rob and Lucy said themselves it wasn't a kid's show; comment on that since you contradicted their words. I'm sure many little boys go through the older brother or father's magazine stash look at Playboy. Because they view it doesn't mean it's a kid's magazine.

Also a bit of advice, if you want to have this Q/A/discussion section to your website you need to try and be a bit more objective. You are very eager to criticize anyone and anything in the entertainment industry(from Spielberg to Hanks) yet never one objective negative word comes out about Rob, Ted or Bruce; three of your buddies. You get offensive when I mentioned it was sick for this show to be directed at kids with it's content(even when you've only seen a few episodes where I've seen them all) and say so what, he's rich. Let someone else, who isn't one of your buddies, put this kind of content out and say it's directed at kids and see if you are so quick to back them up.

David

Dear David:

Oh, OK, "Xena" is a show for adults and really sophisticated entertainment and I just haven't been picking up on it all these years. And I suppose "Gilligan's Island" and "Charlie's Angels" were, too. And why are you so desperate to catch me or Rob up in a lie, or have me criticize Rob? Rob's not only my friend, he's my employer. I must say that you seem rather antagonistic. This is probably due to watching all that TV. You might try reading a book, then you'd see that TV is a pretty light-weight medium in its totality, and "Xena" is certainly not one of the heavier shows.

Josh

Name: Rose

E-mail:

Hi again Mr Becker, and thanks for answering my former question. Here's another one for you.

I'm not asking you to actually criticize or depreciate anyone's work, but... Is there a Xena episode you wish you would have been directing ? And what would you have made differently in it (basically...do not feel compelled to post a storyboard here... unless you're in the mood for it.) Thanks again for your consideration.

Rose

Dear Rose:

I've seen very few other episodes beside the ones I've directed, so there are no episodes I can think of that I would have liked to direct.

Josh

Name: Xenamour
E-mail: xenamour@cs.com

Dear Josh,

I read in your response to another question that the demographics for Xena put the majority of the fans in the 7 to 12 year old range. Guess that explains why it speaks to my inner child. :) Seriously, I find it difficult to believe that bit since most of my friends (with kids) who watch, don't think their children should (watch)... "too *adult* for them" to quote them exactly.

I was wondering how those demographics are collected... the Nielsen boxes (again)? I live in a heavily populated area in Central California and have never met ANYONE who has had one of those boxes. And *yes* I do ask quite a few people just out of curiosity... makes for a good dinner party conversation starter anyway. (I have always had a sneaking suspicion that those Nielsen people are taking ya'll for a ride. Those boxes are probably all piled up in some double-wide in the West Texas Planes in front of Derryl and his other brother Derryl, who are endlessly channel surfing via their Universal Remotes).

Additionally, I think there have historically been some fairly "adult" themes on Xena, not to mention the subtext issue, well... and the many romps or near romps Xena has taken with various male co-stars on screen. I am having a hard time correlating that with a 7 to 12 year old age group of primary viewers. I am probably obtusely naive in thinking that such scenes are a bit much to allow a 7 year old to view. May I ask, if you had a 7 year old, what would your take on this be?

I myself love the messages in Xena, and have found inspiration in the central story of Love and of Redemption it tells... two souls lost... each in a different way... finding in one another the motivation to grow, and the acceptance, love, and forgiveness they needed to help them learn their place(s) in the world. I know an awful lot of adults who voice a sense of vicarious affirmation they get from the show... acceptance of many aspects of their own humanity via Xena and Gabrielle's journey toward understanding each other and themselves. I wonder what it means sociologically speaking that a show whose supposed primary audience is 7 to 12 year olds, speaks so profoundly to so many adults of all ages?

One of Many Rather Befuddled Fallen Angels,
Xenamour

Dear Xenamour:

The show may well speak profoundly to some adults, but it's intended for children. "The Simpsons" is definitely made for kids, but it's probably the brightest show on the air and most of the jokes are not aimed at kids, but nevertheless, their main demographic is kids. Quite frankly, I don't think "Xena" is anywhere near as smart as "The Simpsons." But both are kid's shows. If I had a 7-year old, which I don't, they could either watch everything or nothing. As John Steinbeck said (and I paraphrase), kids will find out everything sooner or later, they may as well get on it sooner.

Josh

Name: David
E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Funny you say Xena is a kids show when I have interviews in my hand right now of Lucy and Rob in which

they say that Xena isn't a kids show.

They both say Xena is much darker than Hercules and many things in Xena isn't suitable for children and that parents should screen Xena before letting the children watch. They don't sound like comments about a kids show, and those words come right from the man's mouth himself. And do you really think things like seeing a skeleton rip through a pregnant Xena's stomach, or the slaughter of an elk and Xena and Gab drinking it's blood, or many of the sexist jokes that always appears with the Joxer character, etc., which we have seen this season, are traits for a children's show. Do you think Lucy sticking her tongue down Kevin Smith's throat(from Eternal bonds) or taking her clothes off and attempting to seduce him(Amphipolis Uner Seige) are traits for a childrens show. Or do you think Ted's character drugging Renee's character to make her think she has amnesia then lying to her to make her believe she's his wife and trying every thing he can to get into her pants(Married With Fishsticks) are nice messages for kids to see. I seriously hope not, yet this is what we get week after week on Xena.

But like I said I have comments made by Rob and Lucy in my hand here that say Xena isn't a childrens show. You seem to be contradicting what they are saying.

But if Rob is shooting for the 9-12 demographiic with the content we have seen on Xena this past season, some of which I've mentioned above, he's a sick man.

David

Dear David:

He doesn't have to shoot for the 7-12 demographic, he's got it. If Rob is a sick man, he's also a rich, sick man that has found a formula for appealing to millions of people. The show isn't everything you want it to be? Who gives a shit? The show's on in about 120 countries around the world.

Josh

Name: August
E-mail: joxerfan@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

May I also thank you for the go-ahead on generating some lively discussion here.

I am struck by two things you have mentioned - the importance of the material one is working with (and understanding it!) and the value of communicating with your actors - making suggestions, listening to their input, putting them at ease, helping them to look good, and helping them to bring out the full meaning of the material.

You know, while that may be rare in films (and TV) nowadays, that's pretty much standard practice for good stage directors. Given that you've always concentrated on film, I wonder why that is? Is good directing good directing, no matter what the medium? Do too many directors in this day and time come from a tech background (cameraman, editor, etc.) exclusively? (I'm thinking of Barry Sonnenfeld for example.) Are stage directors by definition more focused on substantive things, rather than camera angles and special effects?

And finally, have you ever been, or would you ever be involved in a stage production?

Thanks!
August

Dear August:

Within our group I have been quoted, usually derisively, since high school as saying, "Live theater is dead." I still stick with it, too. It's just not a very vital medium at present. Movies just go out to a lot more people. And now it does seem that many directors do come from technical backgrounds and don't know how to talk to actors. I believe that actors do need to be spoken to occasionally, if for no other reason than just to see how they're doing.

Josh

Name: David

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

Well I just put it bluntly. Kindrid spirits could have been so much better. I loved the VERY FEW scenes we had dealing with Xen and Gab and them wondering whether to stay with the amazons or not. That should have been the main story the episode dealt with and most of the scenes should have dealt with that.

Unfortunaltely the episode had to be corroded with the Joxer storyline, which had absolutely no purpose other than make the character look like an jackass. Everytime I waited to see what was going to happen with Xena and Gab the scene would swith to Ted and he would do his same old schtict which we see every time he appears. Unless your a 2 year old, seeing the same thing gets old real quick.

And one question, when you sit back and wach the wrestling scene do you honestly think it was done well and the acting by Lucy and Ted was right on? If so you seriously need to see an eye doctor. There is such a thing as a little over the top and you guys definately showed it with this scene. It was embarrassing. I think Lucy is a wonderful actress and proved it several times this episode, but she just doesn't do that over the top slapstick well. When I was watching her and Ted I had to turn my eyes because it was so embarrassing. I mean a little child may think it's funny, but give me a break. Way over the top.

The show could have been great if the show had centered around Lucy and Renee and their story. Unfortunatly Sam's little brother and Rob's buddy can't seem to find any other work than what they give him so he once again ruined what could have been good entertainment. I really wish the man could find at least some other work on his own. I mean his character is nothing more than a clown, so there is no diversity in the character so it would be okay to se the character a few times each season, but when he appears in half the episodes a season it just kills the show. I guess that's the perks though when your born into the right family. I know Ted's your buddy, but I think the man is more cut for bagging groceries than working in front of the camera. He simply isn't an actor and is no where in the league of someone like Renee. I mean if the man is as talented as you claim him to be, explain to me why practically everything you see him in is a Sam Raimi or Rob Tapert production. My guess is when Xena ends hell be out of a job, so if Jack is still airing he'll start invading their sets. When I hear you make comments about how talented the man is and comment on how proud you are of the idiotic wrestling scene, I can't really take any of your comments seriously.

Maybe you could try and develop a children's program. You definately know how to shoot things entertaining to adoloescents. Unfortunatly Xena isn't a children's show.

Just my opinions.

David

Dear David:

Ah, but that's where you're wrong, obsession-breath. "Xena" *is* a kid's show. That some adults like you watch it is its strange and interesting cross-over ability. The real demographic is about 7 to 12, and they LOVE Joxer, and probably loved the wrestling match, too. What you need to do is either, A. Watch a show for adults, or B. Stop taking kid's shows seriously.

Josh

Name: John Forde
E-mail: jforde40@hotmail.com

Josh,

Howdy partner, hope all is well. Please name a few must see Steve McQueen films.

Also, any new developments on "If I Had A Hammer?"

Thanks,
John

PS: Bravo JT! I could not have expressed myself better, thank you.

Howdy, John:

Nothing new on "Hammer," other than I'm starting to get disturbed by the sound house that's working on it and their seeming lack of progress. As to Steve McQueen, who I like very much: his very first film is "Somebody Up There Likes Me" with Paul Newman as Rocky Graziano is terrific film, then there's "The Magnificent Seven," "The Great Escape" (one of my favorites), I sort of like "Love With a Proper Stranger" and "Baby the Rain Must Fall," is pretty good, with just an awful title song that McQueen fakes playing and singing, "The Cincinnati Kid," which has both Ann-Margret and Tuesday Weld at their babelicious best, "Nevada Smith," "The Sand Pebbles" (another one of my favorites), "Bullitt," "The Reivers," "Junior Bonner" (directed by Sam Peckinpah, with some brilliant editing), "The Getaway" and "Papillion," which is yet another of my favs.

Josh

Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Josh,

Thanks for the go-ahead on the rant. To your "forum for ideas" point, the format of this page, while great for Q&A, doesn't really lend itself to a lot of discussion -- it's set up for more one-way communication (toss something over the fence, wait for you to respond.) If you are interested, it's pretty easy to set up a message forum where people can reply to each other and your posts highlight in red. (Here's an example, if you're not familiar with what I'm talking about : <http://boards.stratics.com/cgi-bin/shadowbane/postlist.pl?Cat=&Board=shadowdev>)

..not that I would replace the Q&A section, but it might give you another avenue somewhat closer to what you're looking for.

JT

p.s. feel free to have your site mgr email me if they want help setting one up. like I said, it's not really hard to do.

Dear JT:

We already had that here, and it was immediately misused by the Xena fans who turned this into another Xena forum. I don't think people coming here need to communicate with each other, I was just expressing my hope that people would discuss ideas here, as you have done. Perhaps bring up a good old movie they just saw on TV, an interesting cinematic approach they saw somewhere, whatever. Oh well, I'll go with whatever comes down.

Josh

Name: Themba Luthuli
E-mail: tsl1624@yahoo.com

Dear Josh:

What would be the first critical directing principles to teach to a class of first time director`s on stage?

Dear Themba:

Know the text, meaning read it at least several times. Also, don't let the actors just stand there, try to keep them moving. There's something to start with.

Josh

Name: JT
E-mail: jcarroll@austin.rr.com

Josh,

Good god, man, how do you manage to keep your composure on this forum? I mean, i read this stuff on a couple-times-a-week basis (clearly not as much as you) and half the time I just want to throttle some of my fellow posters. Now it occurred to me that you've likely had the same thought, but (as you have a career and therefore must try to remain professional) can't really just lay into them.

..but I don't have a career, so I think I shall.

1. MELISSA. Are you fucking kidding me? I mean, reading your messages, I'm half convinced your're someone at RenPics having a bit of fun with Josh. You actually expect him to print out a bunch of ill-formed, worthy questions written ENTIRELY IN CAPS LOCK to Robert Tapert and say "Hey, man, could you answer these for some chick on the internet I've never met who can't figure out how to use a keyboard? It's for a school project!" Please. Josh even TOLD you he wouldn't do it for you, and you reply "HEY ARE THEY DONE YET?" I'm sorry, that's just too sad to be true.

2. To the others with school projects.. Wow. I'm not even IN Hollywood, and I wouldn't answer your questions. Here's a bit of advise for you : Your teachers aren't going to know. Pick a director you like, preferrably one relatively obscure (spielberg doesn't do many homework assignments anymore) and make

some shit up. Hollywood is based on lies anyway. They'd probably give you a bonus for creativity.

3. To Them That Hate Josh For His Opinion Of American Beauty. I've seen the movie, I don't happen to think its great, but then again, who the hell am I? Some anonymous guy on the Internet. Guess what? So are you. No one cares what you have to say. Josh didn't call you to tell you his opinion, you came here. To his webpage. If you feel that strongly about it, don't bitch -- Fight back! Beat Josh at his own game. Put up your own website, write a glowing review, and see if Josh logs into your page to tell you why you suck.

4. To all you xena freaks (in fact, doesn't one of you actually use the handle "xena freak"?) You know, it seems pretty clear to me that directing xena eps is pretty much a day job for Josh. He doesn't really know that much about the show (other than the episodes he has directed) and while he's bright enough not to piss on a golden goose, it would appear to me that he's not *that* big a fan. He obviously loves the people, and I'm sure the paycheck doesn't hurt. He does a good job, and he seems quite willing to answer technical questions about the show.. but he's hardly an expert on lucy, or renee, he's certainly not calling them liars and he doesn't really, *really* seem to know (or care) how good of friends they are in real life -- which is probably a good thing, as it's not really his concern. He's certainly not going to help you find them, or stalk them all the way to NZ, or ask renee out on a date for you.

So yeah, I know this isn't a public forum, so I'll end my rant here. Josh, if you decide not to post this message, I'll certainly understand -- it's just as bad a misuse of the forum as half of the other questions seem to be..

Keep up the good work, and next time I'll ask some legitimate questions, I promise.

Sincerely,
JT

Dear JT:

Go ahead and vent away, particularly when you're defending me. I've always hoped that this Q&A section would actually be a forum between people discussing IDEAS, since ideas are what excite me. That's not how it turned out, however, which is OK, too. If someone has something to say, either good or bad, you see I'll post it. I do want this Q&A to be a lively place for folks to visit.

Josh

Name: Scott S.
E-mail:

Josh,

What book are you reading right now? What is your favorite genre? And, have you been watching the Turner Classics' tribute to Oscars?

BEst,
Scott

Dear Scott:

I am reading (and I'm just about done) "Wizard: The Life and Times of Nikola Tesla" by Marc J. Seifer, which is very well-written and I've enjoyed it immensely. I suppose if I had to choose a favorite genre it would be

drama. Yes, I've re-watched a few of the Oscar-winners. I just re-taped "Ben-Hur" in letterbox. The 1931 version of "Cimarron" is on tonight, which is a big deal for me in that I have every film that's won Best Picture on tape, except "Cimarron" and "Cavalcade" (and "Shakespeare in Love," but I'll get that soon).

Josh

Name: Fake Shemp

E-mail:

Josh,

What happened to Scott Spiegel? He seemed to have so much promise. Does he stay in contact with Rob, Sam, and Bruce? Does he have an agent?

Thanks,
Fake Shemp

Dear Fake Shemp:

He lives in Hollywood, I know that. No, he doesn't stay in touch with anyone, nor, apparently, does he answer his messages. He and I haven't spoken in years, although, whenever I do speak to him it's always pleasant.

Josh

Name: Robin Goodman

E-mail:

Dear Josh,

I am looking forward to seeing Kindred Spirits. I live in Chicago. We get everything a week later. So this Saturday-I'll finally get to see it.

But, from other sites, there has been a lot of great feedback involving this ep. It seems everyone is complaining about how the 5th season has been going between gab and xena. Or should I say the lack of. But it doesn't really matter. I am a devoted xena fan and will watch regardless.

Anyway, just wanted to let you know how i appreciate the great effort into directing the episodes..... thanks

-Robin

Dear Robin:

I hope you like it.

Josh

Name: Rose

E-mail:

Mr Becker,

I first want to congratulate you for the great job you make ; keep doing such good episodes, please. But I mail you to ask you this : I'm french, and here, entire scenes are often cut off from the episodes. For example, the killer rabbit scene in ISAIH was reduced to the beginning of it, when it jumps on Gab. Did you know there were such enormous cuts, and how do you react to the fact that your work - hard work- is simply partially erased ? Despite these cuts, I can only acknowledge the quality of your directing and patiently wait for the next time I'll see your name on the TVscreen. Thanks for your attention, and good luck for all your upcoming projects.

Rose

Dear Rose:

I've watched Xena in other countries and seen how they recut them--it's crazy. What particularly annoys me is they will ignore the commercial breaks that are given to them, then cut in other ones. It sucks!

Josh

Name: August

E-mail: joxerfan@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

A biographical question of sorts, if I may. Bruce Campbell often refers to his new show having overtones of "F-Troop," "Wild Wild West," and "Get Smart," all of which were popular when you guys were kids in the late '60's and early '70's. And of course there are Three Stooges references in many things you and/or he have done (which I love, by the way!) So I'm curious - before you *seriously* got into watching movies, what were your favorites? TV shows, movies, books and magazines. For example, did you get into the Batman craze, did you read MAD and Eerie magazines, were you a Hardy Boys fan?

Thanks,
August

Dear August (a truly inquiring mind):

I started watching movies as early as I can remember and taking them quite seriously. As a kid I loved TV, particularly Saturday morning cartoons--my favs were always the Warner Bros. stuff and Rocky & Bullwinkle. I adored "Batman" in it's mid-60s incarnation with Adam West, as well as the original "Star Trek." I was devoted to Mad Magazine from probably 8 years old until 11 or 12 when I switched to National Lampoon. I never liked any comic books, Famous Monsters, Eerie, EC or any of that stuff, although all my friends did. But I was a serious movie fan by the time I was 10 years old. I was also an avid reader of books from quite young, 9 or 10, and I still am.

Josh

Name: Tony

E-mail:

Hey Josh.

Funny you always make the point of how (not)close Lucy and Renee are. I'll just ask you flat out, are they friends or not? Not (best)friends or soulmates or whatever, but just friends who like each other.

Main reason I'm asking is because in every interview each give they say how much they like each other and how good friends they are. Here's a small excerpt of an interview that Renee gave to her fan club:

Sometimes, I think, other actresses come on the set and may feel threatened by our friendship. And it's not that Lucy and I should or shouldn't act a certain way, we're just very close! We're always talking about our lives. Some of it is gossip, maybe a little meddling. But most of the time, it's about parallel feelings that we are having in our lives. I've had wonderful girlfriends before, and people I love as sisters, but Lucy is more than that. I have so much respect for her. And she's someone I'm inspired by.

Lucy has made many comments in the same tone. Are you saying Lucy and Renee are lying here? We all know they aren't soulmates like Xena and Gab, but are they friends and do they like each other, point blank? Funny, because if you say they aren't then you in essence are saying they are lying in pretty much every one of their interviews.

Tony

Dear Tony:

I'm not for one single second intimating that anyone is lying. Lucy and Renee get along wonderfully well and work together beautifully, they just don't sit together, that I've seen. Do keep in mind that they spend 12 hours a day, 5 days a week together. Bruce Campbell is one of my very best buddies, but we generally didn't sit together when we were making "Jack." He had his shit to do and I had my shit to do.

Josh

Name: Tony

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

A what if Xena question for you. Now it seems as the director you are in control of what is shot, but as you have also said, this is Lucy and Renee's show and no one is going to make them do anything they don't want to do.

How would you handle it if you wanted to shoot a scene and Lucy or Renee didn't want to do it. For example, let's say Renee felt the howling at the moon in mud scene was to embarrassing and didn't want to do it. What would you do in that situation?

Now I know you've said before that Lucy and Renee are very professional and great to work with so I'm sure that wouldn't happen, but it's just a what if.

Also, out of curiosity, I hear normally they spend anywhere from 10-14 hours on set a day. I know all that time isn't spent shooting. When you've been there what do Lucy and Renee normally spend their time doing when they aren't actually shooting.

Thanks.

Tony

Dear Tony:

I've never had the problem, so I'm not sure how to respond. It's not like anything we're going to shoot is a surprise when we finally get to shooting it. If anyone has an objection, it's undoubtedly been aired by then. Soon after Lucy broke her hip she was objecting to doing certain scenes, like jumping off of high places, and we worked it out. For the most part, however, actors don't object to doing scenes, that's their job. As to what Lucy and Renee do between set-ups, they blab with the cast and crew around them, just like everybody else. The Xena fans won't like to hear this, but they never sit together.

Josh

Name: Bill

E-mail:

Dear Josh:

I was reading a scriptwriting handbook by Alfred Brenner and it raised a few questions I thought you might know the answer to. First, he talks about not paying the agents upfront to read your material. Would this mean those who do this are not really agents? He also talks as if you don't need an agent to sale material (and I believe I have a better chance than an agent you have to pay upfront). I've heard your script writing tales so I know your sales history, but I thought you might know a little about it. I just couldn't understand this since they have the whole solicited/un which I understand to mean you need an agent. Obviously, I'm just learning about all this. Also, do sitcoms differ from hour dramas in set up...the following is the way I understand it...you have to number every new angle you have instead of every new scene. A confusing aspect was "favoring so and so" and "including so and so". Any light you can shine on these questions would be deeply appreciated.

Dear Bill:

If I'm not mistaken--and I could be--agents are not allowed to charge up front for anything in California. Then again, you may not be in California. Anyway, nothing you write should be numbered, that's strictly for the shooting script and the numbering is generally done by the 1st A.D. Also, as far as I'm concerned, scripts should NEVER include any discussion of angles, which is not the writer's domain. The writer's job is to say what the location is, INT. JOE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM -- DAY, not how it will be shot.

Josh

Name: Alicia Gaspar de Alba

E-mail: agdealba@ucla.edu

Dear Josh:

First, thank the GODS for putting you at the helm of "Kindred Spirits." It is the first time in all of Season 5 that I have seen the old Xena & Gabrielle, their relationship issues, their exchange of looks, their prioritizing of each other. Graciasgraciasgracias. I notice from your passport that you and I share two things: we are both Leos and born in 1958. Very cool. My question: I've been writing to Lucy via Sharon Delaney for several months now about my recently-released novel about the 17th-century Mexican nun that was known the world

over as the "first feminist of the Americas" and Latin America's "Tenth Muse." Since I know Lucy loves to read and that she has a soft spot in her heart for nuns, not to mention historical fiction, I've been wanting to send her a copy of my novel for months. In fact I even dedicated her a copy and wanted to give it to Kevin Smith at the Pasadena Con, except I never got the chance to get close to him for his autograph. I would so much love to give Lucy her copy of the book, SOR JUANA'S SECOND DREAM, as a birthday present from me, a professor at UCLA. Do you have any ideas? Would you be willing to help out a fellow Leo (you know how stubborn we can be where the heart is concerned) and perhaps allow me to mail the book to you so that you can give it to Lucy for me? If you'd like to check up on me to verify that I'm not some crazed fan, please check out my own webpage at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/chavez/gaspar.html>

In any case, I thank you for reading this, for being the fine director that you are, and for spreading the Xena love.

Alicia

Dear Alicia:

I will not forward anything to Lucy. However, if you sent something to Renaissance Pictures, which is located at Universal Studios in Universal City, California, it might very well find its way to Lucy, but I promise nothing.

Josh

Name: MELISSA C.
E-mail: ILBAX1429@aol.com

Dear Josh:

HAVE YOU ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS?? I KNOW YOU ARE PROBABLY REALLY BUSY, BUT I REALLY NEED THOSE QUESTIONS THAT I ASKED YOU TO DO FOR ME BECAUSE IT'S DUE THIS FRIDAY, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE I CAN INTERVIEW. E3VEN IF YOU DO NOT HAVE TIME, STILL PLEASE E-MAIL ME BACK SO I CAN KNOW IN ADVANCE.

Dear Melissa:

JUMP IN A LAKE!!

Josh

Name: xenazealot
E-mail: jmdonnel@uiowa.edu

Dear Josh:

I was wondering if you could comment a little on the process a script goes through once you get ahold of it. The reason I ask is because though I've liked this season of Xena some of the dialogue and sometimes the overall structure of stories has not been as satisfying as past years. (Acting/Direction/Production Values seems as high as ever) Can directing save a bad script? Or are you stuck with what you get? Maybe you could talk about changing a script in a way that you thought improved the story.

Thanks,
xenazealot

Dear Xenazealot:

I change things a lot more than most TV directors, so I'm the exception, not the rule. Most directors treat the script like it's nailed in stone, as many script supervisors have informed me. Particularly in the funny episode, which is what I've mostly done, I'm always looking for another laugh in the scene. In many instances I add what seems to me like an obvious punchline that just isn't there. One I'm particularly proud of is in "Warrior . . . Princess . . . Tramp" when Meg gets Joxer out of prison and he asks, "What's the plan?" and she kisses him. That's what's scripted. I added, after the kiss Joxer asks, "That's the plan?" Meg says, "What'dya think?" Joxer grins, "Good plan" and they kiss again. The whole schtick of Meg stealing silverware and it falling out of her dress at the end I added. In this new episode I added all the whittling, the wrestling match, the fact that the final scene is at night (it was scripted as Day for some insane reason), Xena's line, "If I was an Amazon," all the eye-poking, nose-grabbing between Gaby and Joxer, all the "fat pervert" dialog with the Amazon kids, the idea of Joxer coming on to Amazons as they walk by, the "Spagetti and eyeballs, mine" line, the "I'm attached to my eyes, both of them" line, Rhea's line, "It's called kissing, wanna try it?" Joxer's line, "You're a Pagan, I'm a Zoroastrian, how will we raise the children?" the "How was that?" "Pathetic, just remember these three words: practice, practice, practice," of course, everything Xena says in the ring, "I am the ultimate woman! And I will crush his head in the thighs of doom!" Everything Ted says he came up with, but all at my behest. Xena's final line of the wrestling match when Joxer passes out, "Everytime you turn his brain off," etc. They're all over the place.

Josh

Name: August
E-mail: joxerfan@hotmail.com

Dear Josh:

Congratulations on "Kindred Spirits!" There's a tremendous amount of positive buzz about the return of the "warm, caring" relationship between Xena and Gabrielle that hadn't been seen in some time. (And I'm glad you didn't have to splice in any scenes of Selma Blair doing the Batusi.)

Two quick questions:

Ted Raimi's line about "I resent that." "Do you deny it?" "No, I just resent it." Straight from an old Stooges short, if I'm not mistaken. An ad-lib by him?

Also - you had indicated earlier that both XWP and "Jack" would be using local directors exclusively from now on. Did you mean the remainder of the season, or in general?

Thanks,
August

Dear August:

That Stooges line was put in by both Ted and I. Regarding the Kiwi directors, I certainly hope that doesn't apply to next season also, but it very possibly could.

Josh

[BACK TO Main Archive Page](#)

[BACK TO Current Q&A](#)

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